

Lofgren, Congressional Caucus on Vietnam Call for Release of Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang

Vietnam Should Stop Imprisoning Supporters of Religious Freedom and Human Rights

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December 14, 2004

Washington, D.C. - Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose) joined her colleagues in the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam last Friday in sending a letter to the heads of state from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam regarding the unjust imprisonment of Reverend Nguyen Hong Quang, Vice President and Secretary General of the Mennonite Church and five other evangelist workers who were sentenced to excessive and unmerited sentences from the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City.

The charges against Reverend Nguyen Hong Quang and his Mennonite associates restrict religious freedom and fail to respect human rights in Vietnam. The Representatives called upon the Vietnamese government for a prompt release of the prisoners.

The following is a copy of the letter:

December 10, 2004

H.E. Tran Duc Luong

President

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Office of the State

1 Bach Thao

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

H.E. Phan Van Khai

Prime Minister

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Office of the Prime Minister

Hoang Hoa Tham

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

H.E. Nong Duc Manh

General Secretary, Communist Party of Vietnam

President of the National Assembly

Central Committee Headquarters

Nguyen Canh Chan

1A Hung Vuong

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

H.E. Nguyen Van An

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

National Assembly

35 Ngo Quyen

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Dear Sirs,

As members of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, we are writing once again regarding the unjust imprisonment of Reverend Nguyen Hong Quang, Vice President and Secretary General of the Mennonite Church. We are respectfully petitioning for the release of Reverend Quang and five other evangelist workers who were sentenced to excessive and unmerited sentences from the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City on November 12, 2004.

As we stated in our previous letter, we have been informed that the charges brought against Reverend Quang and his Mennonite associates are unwarranted and a veiled attempt to restrict religious freedom in Vietnam. Reverend Quang was sentenced to three years in prison for "resisting officers of the law while doing their duty." However, Reverend Quang's record as a peaceful spokesperson for religious freedom and human rights seems to contradict these charges.

Furthermore, our State Department has informed us that representatives from the American Embassy were barred access to the trial. The denial of open trial proceedings is particularly alarming and further raises suspicion regarding the legitimacy of the charges against the Mennonites. Additionally, it appears public support for the detained Mennonites was suppressed during the trial proceedings.

The sentencing of Reverend Quang and his associates, along with the Vietnamese Government's continued aggression toward religious leaders in the country, is viewed unfavorably by the United States and all free nations alike. We urge you to take the steps necessary to respect human rights by facilitating the release of Reverend Quang, his associates, and the hundreds of political and religious prisoners in Vietnam. Taking action in Reverend Quang's case will strengthen our

diplomatic relations and send a positive message to the world that Vietnam is committed to affording its citizens human rights and religious freedom.

Sincerely,

ZOE LOFGREN, Member of Congress

LORETTA SANCHEZ, Member of Congress

CHRIS SMITH, Member of Congress

TOM DAVIS, Member of Congress

W. TODD AKIN, Member of Congress